

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BUENOS 08556 212302Z

63

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-20 PM-07 NSC-10 SSO-00 NSCE-00

INRE-00 MED-03 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 PRS-01

USIE-00 OPR-02 SY-10 AID-20 DRC-01 /106 W

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O R 212210Z NOV 73

FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4405

INFO USCINCSO

DIA DOD

AMEMBASSY ASUNCION

AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 8556

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: XGDS

TAGS: PINT, AR (PERON)

SUBJECT: PERON'S SERIOUS CONDITION AND POSSIBLE EFFECTS

REF BA 8513, BA 8525

1. SUMMARY. COMMUNIQUE ISSUED BY PERON'S DOCTORS SPEAKS OF RAPID AND COMPLETE RECOVERY. WHILE HIS ATTACK HAS CREATED GENUINE CONCERN, IT IS ENTIRELY POSSIBLE THAT HE MAY WEATHER IT AND RECOVER. SHOULD HE NOT, SITUATION WILL BECOME EXTREMELY UNCERTAIN. WE BELIEVE CHAMBER PRESIDENT RAUL LASTIRI, RATHER THAN ISABELITA DE PERON, LIKELY TO ASSUME CHARGE IN EVENT PERON'S DEMISE. LEFT WOULD DOUBTLESS REACT STRONGLY, BUT IF MILITARY AND OTHER PARTIES STAND BEHIND HIM, HE COULD PROBABLY SURVIVE AT LEAST UNTIL NEW ELECTIONS COULD BE HELD (AND NEW ELECTIONS - WHICH CALLED FOR BY CONSTITUTION - SOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY BE DEMANDED BY LATTER SECTORS AS PRICE FOR SUPPORT). SHOULD PROVISIONAL PRESIDENT HAVE DIFFICULTY IN
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PAGE 02 BUENOS 08556 212302Z

MAINTAINING CONTROL, MILITARY MIGHT FEEL OBLIGED DESPITE PRESENT

RELUCTANCE, TO ASSUME CONTROL TO FORESTALL THREAT FROM LEFT. THIS, HOWEVER, WOULD CAUSE EVEN STRONGER REACTION FROM LEFT AND MIGHT WELL LEAD TO CIVIL WAR. EVEN IF PERON RECOVERS, OF COURSE, THIS NEW RELAPSE EMPHASIZES DELICATE NATURE OF HIS HEALTH AND WILL PLACE ADDITIONAL CLOUD ON FUTURE OF HIS ADMINISTRATION. END SUMMARY

2. THERE ARE NO RPT NO REPORTS OF MILITARY MOVEMENTS IN REACTION TO REPORTS OF PERON'S SERIOUS ILLNESS. AT PRESENT TIME, THE MILITARY APPEAR TO BE DEEPLY CONCERNED OVER ANY DEVELOPMENT WHICH WOULD REMOVE PERON FROM SCENE AND GENUINELY RELUCTANT TO RESUME UNPOPULAR ROLE OF GOVERNING DIRECTLY - A BURDEN SO RECENTLY LAID DOWN.

3. COMMUNIQUE ISSUED BY HIS DOCTORS SPEAKS OF RAPID AND COMPLETE RECOVERY. THIS MAY BE SMOKE SCREEN, BUT IF SO IT HAS SO FAR HAD DESIRED SOPORIFIC EFFECT. GENERAL PUBLIC HAS TAKEN NEWS CALMLY AND SEEMS TO BE ASSUMING THAT PROBLEM IS NOT SERIOUS AND THAT HE WILL MEND QUICKLY.

4. LATTER ASSUMPTION ENTIRELY POSSIBLE. EVEN THOUGH CONDITION LAST NIGHT AND EARLY THIS MORNING APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN SERIOUS, THIS DOES NOT MEAN HE WILL NOT RECOVER. CLOSE, WELL CONNECTED PERONIST SOURCE ASSURES US THAT ILLNESS DEFINITELY IS NOT AN INFARCTION AS WIDELY REPORTED BY OTHER SOURCES, AND THAT AFTER CHECKING HIS CONTACTS HE NOW BELIEVES PERON WILL RECOVER AND MAY EVEN BE ABLE TO MAKE SCHEDULED TRIP TO US. NEVERTHELESS, THIS NEW ATTACK CARRIES EXTREMELY GRAVE IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE. ASSUMING FOR PURPOSES OF CONTINGENCY PLANNING, THAT PROGNOSIS IN FACT IS GRAVE OR THAT PERON SHOULD DIE, SITUATION HERE WOULD BECOME EXTREMELY FLUID AND UNPREDICTABLE. WE BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT FOLLOWING ARE MOST LIKELY CONSIDERATIONS WHICH WOULD GOVERN DIRECTION OF EVENTS:

A. THOUGH GENERALLY ACCEPTED NOW AS VICE PRESIDENT, ISABELITA'S ACCEPTABILITY AS PRESIDENT WOULD BE EXTREMELY LIMITED, A FACT OF WHICH SHE DOUBTLESS AWARE. IT SEEMS LIKELY, THEREFORE, THAT SHE WOULD RESIGN OR BE FORCED (EVEN BY HER SUPPORTERS ON PERONIST RIGHT WHO ARE ANXIOUS TO MAINTAIN MILITARY SUPPORT) TO RESIGN. THIS ESPECIALLY TRUE SINCE NEXT IN ORDER OF SUCCESSION WOULD

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 BUENOS 08556 212302Z

BE RAUL LASTIRI, WHO HAS JUST REASSUMED DUTIES AS PRESIDENT OF CHAMBER (JOSE ANTONIO ALLENDE IS ONLY ACTING RPT ACTING PROVISIONAL PRESIDENT OF SENATE AND THUS - IF OUR UNDERSTANDING OF CONSTITUTION CORRECT - NOT IN LINE TO FOLLOW ISABELITA.) LASTIRI, LOPEZ REGA, GELBARD AND ISABELITA ARE ALL ALLIES (OF MUTUAL CONVENIENCE). HENCE, CHANCES THAT, IN EFFORT TO HANG ON TO SOME OF THE MARBLES BY NOT INSISTING ON HAVING THEM ALL, "LITTLE WOMAN" WOULD RESIGN IN FAVOR OF LASTIRI ARE GOOD.

B. LASTIRI WOULD PROBABLY BE ACCEPTABLE TO MILITARY BUT THEY, LIKE MANY OTHER OBSERVERS, MAY HAVE DOUBTS THAT HE COULD CONTROL THE PERONIST LEFT. HOWEVER, OUR CONTACTS INDICATE THAT MILITARY ARE RELUCTANT AT THIS TIME TO REASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR GOVERNING AND APPARENTLY HAVE FORMULATED NO PLANS TO DO SO. THEY WOULD PREFER, IF NECESSARY, TO BE GUIDING FORCE BEHIND A CIVILIAN PRESIDENT, AS IN THE CASE OF GUIDO AFTER OVERTHROW OF FRONDISI IN 1962. IF LAW AND ORDER BECAME SERIOUSLY ENDANGERED, MILITARY MIGHT THEN MAKE PREEMPTIVE MOVE. THEY MIGHT ALSO BE TEMPTED SHOULD ISABELITA INSIST ON HER SUCCESSION. BUT SUCH INTERVENTION WOULD IN ALL PROBABILITY SIMPLY RESULT IN MORE VIOLENCE - POSSIBLY EVEN IN FULL SCALE CIVIL WAR. IF PERONIST YOUTH ARE LESS THAN ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT LASTIRI, THEY DETEST MILITARY EVEN MORE.

C. UCR, AND WE ASSUME MOST OTHER PARTIES, STAND FIRMLY ON CONSTITUTION AND AGAINST MILITARY COUP. SPEAKING TO HYPOTHETICAL SITUATION, THEY ARE TAKING POSITION THAT SHOULD PERON PASS FROM SCENE, ONLY HOPE WOULD BE FOR COUNTRY TO FOLLOW CONSTITUTION - I.E. ACCEPT PROVISIONAL PRESIDENT UNTIL NEW ELECTIONS COULD BE CONVOKED. EVEN UCR, HOWEVER, WOULD BE HAPPIER WITH LASTIRI THAN WITH ISABELITA.

5. PERON'S RELAPSE, EVEN IF HE RECOVERS, IS DISTURBING DEVELOPMENT. IT SUGGESTS HIS HEALTH REALLY IS IN PRECARIOUS STATE AND WILL ADD TO UNCERTAINTIES WHICH ALREADY BECLOUD SCENE.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MEDICAL CARE, PRESIDENT, POLITICAL STABILITY
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 21 NOV 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: thigpegh
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973BUENOS08556
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: BUENOS AIRES
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19731121/aaaaaovu.tel
Line Count: 143
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: BA 8513, BA 8525
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: thigpegh
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15 JAN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <15-Jan-2002 by shawdg>; APPROVED <17-Jan-2002 by thigpegh>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PERON'S SERIOUS CONDITION AND POSSIBLE EFFECTS
TAGS: PINT, AR, (PERON, JUAN)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005